



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Media Freedom in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 1, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

The United States also shares EU concerns regarding trends in media freedom in Azerbaijan. We note the positive steps the Government of Azerbaijan took to allow the return of independent television station ANS to the air in late 2006 and urge the outstanding tender of its frequency to be resolved in a fair and transparent manner.

The United States also supports EU and OSCE efforts to engage in a dialogue with the Government of Azerbaijan, and we hope that dialogue will expand to include representatives of the Azerbaijani press.

We strongly support efforts aimed at promoting a broad-based understanding of the important role that a strong, independent, objective and responsible media plays in a democracy.

To this end, we would urge the Government of Azerbaijan to take specific steps to develop the legal, regulatory and institutional infrastructure to support media freedom and responsibility. This includes decriminalizing libel, as well as investigating and prosecuting those responsible for physical attacks on media representatives. Moreover, we support transparent implementation of modern media laws and regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.